

Pastor's Corner: – 5-4-2019 – Advance Workshop Recap

Last Sabbath we held the Advance Workshop in place of our regular Sabbath School and Church services. Through the workshop we were able to clarify those to whom we feel called, the difference we hope to see God make in their lives, and a few ways we can focus our ministry towards those in the community. Just in case you missed the workshop, here is a brief summary of what we came up with.

We began the workshop by spending time in groups visioning the difference we could make if we were fulfilling God's calling for us to be actively serving in the community. This process involved a bit of brainstorming, discussion, and drawing. Yeah, not everyone loves drawing out their ideas, but sometimes word pictures can stick around longer than words by themselves, so we drew pictures.

The consensus from the drawings was that we feel God is calling us out of our church building and into the community. Our missional focus should not be a "come and see" approach where we feel we are doing our religious duty by simply having the church open for people to wander in. Rather our focus should be on "go and serve" where we spread the love of Christ to those we meet "out there."

Many of the drawings depicted scenarios where we, as a church, would interact with underserved people bringing them encouragement, assistance, kindness and joy. Through selfless acts of service and showing God's love in practical ways we hope to build relationships and make a tangible difference in their life. Another goal of our mission focus is that it would be consistent over time. "Life on life" was a phrase that was often repeated, meaning we will avoid short term or "one off" events and instead look for longer term consistent opportunities that allow us to interface with the same group repeatedly over time. The only way to make friend is to spend time with each other and that is a primary goal of our mission efforts.

After our little art expression class we talked about the kind of impact we would like to see our church make in the lives of the people that we serve. In general we agreed that God wants us to help people feel love and acceptance. We want to help lighten the load of those who are burdened. And we want to build foundational relationships that can eventually be used to help folks know Jesus. We want their life to be better because we were there.

Another part of the workshop focused on identifying target groups where we could serve. Each table came up with several

possibilities, wrote them on sheets of card stock, and then posted them on the wall, arranged by similar themes. Initially we had probably a dozen or so ministry suggestions. These ranged from reaching out to first responders, to medical centers, elder care facilities, to schools, and many others. We then went through the categories and each participant voted on the ones they were most passionate about. In the end, there were three mission priorities that stood out from the others: Public school teachers and staff, residents of elder care facilities, and underserved youth. These three received the most votes and therefore became our top 3 missional initiative options.

Once we fine-tuned our missional initiative options we spent some time talking about the core values we would need to adopt in order to be effective in connecting with these groups. The top 5 values we identified were: Acceptance of others, Selflessness, Willingness to serve, Commitment to follow through, Honesty, and Humility. The group felt that these would all be necessary in order to fulfill our calling to the community.

So, to summarize my summary, the Advance workshop concluded that the Bismarck Seventh-day Adventist church is being called to engage with the underserved in our community with a special emphasis on public school teachers and staff, the residents of elder care facilities, and youth in the community. We hope to provide encouragement, friendship, and support to these populations and to show God's love in a practical way. Of these three missional initiatives, the Missional Leadership Team believes that our first priority should be to explore opportunities to serve one of our local public schools. We want to let our teachers and staff know that they are appreciated and that we've got their back. How this will all play out is yet to be seen, but we lift it up in prayer and put it all in God's hands.

We are slowly but surely making progress in this area. I know it has been a long haul and I appreciate everyone's patience. We are now at the stage where things will start to really take shape. Please be praying for our MLT as we contact schools and look for opportunities to lead our church in service. As always, I welcome your constructive input as we move forward.

Have a Happy Sabbath,
Pastor Tyler